

Interview H0006 : with Surkhang Lhajam [tib. zur khang Lha lcam], (India, October 1992) : Part No. 2 of 2

The interviewee is the wife of the famous Surkhang Sawangchemo. She talks about her trip to China as a representative of the Women's Association and a secret meeting of 70 government officials in 1959 led by Surkhang Sawangchemo at which the officials planned to take the Dalai Lama abroad. The interviewee also mentions how some kudrak brought their possessions and money to India.

Q

Last time we spoke up to the 1954 period when the Dalai Lama went down to China and the Women's Association had lined up to bid him farewell. So during this time you were at Lhasa, right?

A

Yes.

Q

Did Sawangchemmo go with .

A

He went a little later. There were other Tibetan kudrak who went for a Tour Group and he went as the head of a Tour Group.

Q

What do you mean by Tour Group?

A

The group going for a tour. He went down after about 2 weeks. However, at Beijing he was with the Dalai Lama.

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Q

So where were you at that time?

A

I was in Lhasa.

Q

You did not go to China?

A

No, I did not. Taring and Yabshi Lhajam went.

Q

From the Women's Association?

A

I don't think it was from the Women's Association. Taring and Yabshi Lhajam went together. Lhajam kusho at that time was insisting that I go, but I did not. What should I say, I didn't have any work.

Q

So you have never been to China with a tour group.

A

No, not at that time. He stayed for a year. [interview ends for the day]

Q

Yesterday, while we were talking Kungö came in. So we were speaking about when the Dalai Lama went to China and Sawangchemo went about two weeks later. And you had not gone, but Taring and Yabshi Lhajam did go. So that's what we were talking about yesterday. So after Sawangchemo went down and then came up [to Lhasa]. You may have spoken about it, so what was he saying?

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A

You mean when he went down to China?

Q

Yes.

A

He said that the Chinese gave the Dalai Lama a fantastic welcome and that they were giving a lot of, what to say, khushi, for the officials. Even the servants were getting comfortable places to stay and plenty of food. So he said that they had a good stay. Mainly, since the Dalai Lama was going, they put on a big reception. When the Dalai Lama was there he said that Mao Zedong came to receive him though Sawangchemo was not with him.

Q

So you had not been down at all?

A

No, not at that time.

Q

Did you go later?

A

Later I went when the Dalai Lama went for pilgrimage [to India]. Was it in 1956?

Q

Yes.

A

So in 1956 I was sent down to China. They said that there was a national meeting for women and children's health and for that I was to go as the Tibetan women's representative. I took leave, saying that I had no education to become a representative

and go to meetings. They would not listen and even Aja Taring told me to come to the office. She said, "This time younger sister (tib. Ola [o lags]), it is better to go. Please go," she insisted. So I went. I had a servant and there was a Chinese guide. When I went down, I went via the Northern route and we had to go by car, right? So Sawangchemo had a car provided by the Chinese, so this car was sent with me. It was 11 days up to Lanzhou. At Lanzhou, the Women's Association members came to receive me. I stayed at their office for 2 days. Then they sent me on the train to Beijing.

At Beijing, they said it was the place where the youth stayed. It was called something like the Lanzhou Hotel or something. The hotel was not a famous one nor was it poor. I was put up there. I was alone since no one else came from Tibet. I had a servant and I wondered what I was going to do since I didn't know anybody. So at that time Dönwang [tib. don dbang] Khenjung was staying there as one of the Khendrönlosum in Beijing. I enquired about him and they said that he was staying at the Dalai Lama's Office (Dalai Bensidru [ch. ban shi chu]). So I phoned there and since I knew him I said that I have come and I'm alone and so please lend me some assistance. It's a new country and I don't know anyone and since you have stayed around here, so help me. He said, "Wow! [tib. 'o zi], Lhagam kusho, you have come. I am coming immediately." He came right away and asked, "What can I help you with?" I said at this moment I didn't even have an interpreter. Without an interpreter, if I went to a meeting, it wouldn't be good. So he told the Women's Office and they assigned an Amdo person. However, I couldn't understand the Amdo dialect. He knew written Tibetan and his Chinese was very good. I think he was a party member. He came for the meeting which was for about 7 days.

During that period they said that I have to give a lecture. I thought to myself that at the least, I have to give a lecture and I had made preparations from Tibet. I also asked Sawangchemo. So I had brought a speech. However, one had to give a speech according to the situation at that time. Therefore, I told the Women's Association members that today the meeting is about women and children's health so I want to speak about the health of the Lhasa women and what the Women's Association is like and whether there are doctors during child birth and health care. What it was before and what it is now after liberation. So I said, "Should I speak like this? They said," Yes, that's it. We have nothing to advise. Just say like that, but make it a good one." So I said I need a good interpreter. They told me the interpreter is very good. However, I said I don't understand him at all since he is from Amdo. If possible please give me another one. Then they left me somebody who was supposedly a Lhasan called Dan Xiulin. He was Chinese but was a good musician in

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Tibet who played the Huchin and the big Thechin very well. He had a son. Dan Xiulin and them had come to China during the Guomindang and then later became a cadre. Both his Tibetan and Chinese were good. So I was relieved. Then the meetings began. At first all their chairmen spoke. Later the 5 minority nationality representatives spoke.

Q

So what did you say?

A

I said that. At first the larger minorities spoke, then I was the third one. I read in Tibetan about 4 pages. Then Dan Xiulin interpreted this in Chinese. There was so much applause. Since there was a good interpreter, things worked out well.

Q

So in your speech did you say that things were like that earlier and now things are very good.

A

One had to say the truth and what the actual situation is. If one lies then it will be discovered. I said what it was earlier. There was no Women's Association and no children's doctors. When women gave child birth there was high mortality. So I spoke about this. Earlier that was the case and now in Tibet after liberation the hospitals were good, the schools also, and especially there are good doctors regarding women's health. These days there are no difficulties with child birth. There is no mortality and both women and child survive well, right? Even when the people are sick the care they received in the People's Hospital was very beneficial. If you take the case of the Women's Association, we had no tradition where women worked. Only men worked in the government with the manorial estate being given for service, [tib. zhab brtan pha gzhis]. The wives just worked in the house and took the responsibilities for the home. Now after liberation, the women went to school and even worked in the office if one had the education. So women have received a lot of rights. And even the education of Tibet has become better. So I told the truth. Then they asked how things were in the villages. I said that in Lhasa things were good, but that in the villages there was nothing -- no doctors and schools and it was just like the old days.

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Q

So during this time a lot of people went down to China. At that time too the Chinese were quite enthusiastic about the socialist system.

A

They said that was very good.

Q

So in that way, some who went down thought that maybe it wasn't too bad. I think that's what they thought, a lot of them. So how was it to you?

A

At that time, what should I say. The essential aspects of the communist system, the traders, the lamas and religion and the elites [tib. mi drag], they won't leave them, it was said. Only the people. That I have heard long time ago and wondered whether there would be difficulties later. At that time, they said that everything in the 17-Point Agreement is as it is, so if it stayed that way, then I thought it would be good. At that time I did not think that it would change.

Q

At that time, what was Sawangchemo thinking -- around 1952, 53? The way I see it, those who were working for the government thought the agreement was already signed, nobody was helping from the outside and the Chinese were saying that everything would remain as before and so, they thought, well maybe it wasn't so bad after all. A lot thought that way.

A

Yes, they thought that way?

Q

What did Sawangchemo think?

A

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He didn't believe in it too much. He said that now it was good but gradually there was no alternative except to change. The main idea of Marxism, which is practiced by Mao, is the road we have to travel. So later it would become difficult.

Q

At Lhasa what were you doing at the Women's Association?

A

I was an Uyön.

Q

How many Uyön were there?

A

There were 30 odd Uyön.

Q

What was Taring Mola?

A

She was a Zhuren. The highest Zhuren was Yabshi Lhajam, Ngabö Lhajam and then Taring Lhajam. Then there was a Chinese lady who was higher than them. Should I say higher since they had the same rank, however she had all the power .

Q

Now at Lhasa, there were about 30 Uyön and then there were the Zhuren and so why did you go?

A

At that time, I did not know?

Q

What did Taring Mola say?

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A

She said, "This time, Ola, you must go, the Chinese will not listen, only you, ola, must go, others won't do". Let me first tell you about what happened at Beijing. So I went and had the meeting for seven days. After the meetings were over, there were the parties. Then they asked me what I wanted to do? I said, "I want to go for a tour". They asked where I wanted to go. I said to 3 or 4 famous places. So they sent me for a tour, myself, the Chinese lady, the interpreter and my servant. We went to Hangzhou, Shanghai, Nanjing. It took about two weeks. Then on my return I was staying at the same hotel that we had stayed previously. While at the hotel, they told me I have to go to the Beijing Hotel. That had a huge restaurant, a famous one where the Dalai Lama had stayed. So they kept me there. I was wondering why they did that, kept me at Beijing Hotel. So I went there. Then a Chinese came and said, "Tomorrow you have to meet Chairman Mao". My God! [tib. 'o dzi] I was startled. I said, alright what time. He said at 10.30. So I said - What should I say.

Then I called Dönwang Kungö and asked him to come over. He came and I told him that just now a Chinese man came and told me that I have to meet Chairman Mao. So, kungö, you please advise me on how to meet Chairman Mao. I have not had such meeting. He said, "I see, so this is very important work, so Lhajam kusho, you have to talk nicely and not say anything excessive [tib. thal cha] and reckless [tib. gang byung mang byung]". Of course, I was not going to. He told me to dress properly and clean since you are our Tibetan Sawang's wife, so you have to go nicely.

So the next day I waited and waited. Then they said that the meeting was not today but tomorrow . I thought that I had nothing to say since I had nothing to do with the government. The Chinese had sent me just as a representative. So I wondered what I should say. Then I thought, well, whatever he says I will reply to it. So in my mind I had it all prepared. So tomorrow at 10:30 a car came and I went in that.

Q

Where was the meeting?

A

At his residence. I think it was close by. However, it was a large place and outside I was given a khata nangdzö [tib. nang mdzod] which was to be given to Chairman Mao. I said, "Okay, and went up. There were people from the Miao nationality. There were

many, around 20. So as I went in I gave the khata and he shook hands. They took a lot of photographs. Then we were sitting in order. Next to Mao was a leader, then the Zhuren of the National Women's Association [tib. rgyal yongs bud med], then me. So they took photographs. After that, he waved his hand in goodbye gesture to the Miao people. I was told to come up. There was the relative of Phünwang Buzhang [Phüntso Wangyel], Thutob [tib. mthu stobs] or something like that. He said " Lhajam kusho don't leave". So I went in. The sitting room was rather a small one. At that time Deng Xiaoping was there, then there was another bearded one called Wang Feng or something like that. Then there was the Zhuren of the National Women's Association, the biggest one and myself and Phünwang Buzhang la's relative.

Chairman Mao told me to sit next to him. He was seated like this and he said to sit there. I said no and sat lower down. Then he said to have a cigarette. I said I don't smoke. Then he lit one up. He asked me how I came? I said I came by car via the northern route through Garmu and then took the train. He asked me how the road was. I replied that the road was not completed. There was the Thangula Pass, or whatever it is called, and they were in the process of constructing it. The weather was cold I added. Then he asked, when you came to Beijing it seems that you went for a tour- so how were things. I said that it was very good. He asked whether in Tibet the Chinese were teasing [tib. brnyas brko] the women in the Women's Association. I said, no they weren't. Even if they did, whatever the monks said to us, we would not respond [tib. ya lab slog]. I said that the Tibetan people are very religious and patient. I said that after liberation you have said that the religion and the Dalai Lama's status will remain. So for this I am happy and the people of Tibet are happy. So please do your best to continue . Then he asked how many women were there . I replied about 200 since Lhasa was not big and so there are not that many as here. So what was your perception of China, he asked. I said, "I have never seen China before so these days, what should I say, it is like the work done by the cadres of Tibet after liberation. The clothes of the men and women are the same". So that's what I said. Then they said to have some Chinese tea [tib. qing cha]. So I said I will take leave. He said to stay for a while. So I stayed for a while and then left. He came all the way down to accompany me. From his room to the door of the large house. He was shaking my hands and saying "good, good" [ch. hao hao].

During this time the Dalai Lama was in India for the Buddha Jayanti. A day or two later while I was staying at the hotel, a man came from the Minorities Office or some other office. He asked me to write a letter to Sawangchemo telling him that he should

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not stay in a foreign country for very long since there are a lot of American and English imperialist spies. They will make trouble and even put the personal safety of the Dalai Lama in danger. So they said I have to write a letter. I asked where Sawangchemo was. He said that at this moment they had gone for a pilgrimage and that if I gave the letter to him, then it would get there immediately. So they said that I had to write a letter. Then, I suspected and thought, "I see, the reason they sent me to China was that they thought that Sawangchemo would definitely stay in India. It was for this reason."

Q

When you came down to China, Sawangchemo was in Lhasa, right?

A

You mean the Dalai Lama?

Q

The Dalai Lama and company had not left for India by then, right?

A

When?

Q

No. You had to go down for health matters of the women's group, right? So, when was this, when the Dalai Lama was going to India [answer not finished]

A

It was at the time the Dalai Lama was going to India.

Q

At the time? About how many days?

A

When the Dalai Lama was scheduled to leave for India in about 3 weeks time, it was then that I went to China.

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Q

I see, that many .

A

Anyway, when the Dalai Lama was in India, I was in China.

Q

So did they, [people] like Taring say that you and only you have to go down to China?

A

You mean others? I was told that the Chinese said that I have to go. Tan Zhuren himself said so, I was told. Tan Zhuren was the main leader of the Women's Association.

Q

So do you think that you had to go down to China because they thought that Sawangchemo would stay?

A

I think so, but this is only my suspicion.

Q

Yes.

A

So that's what I thought, because there was no need for me to go, isn't it?

Q

Yes, specially meeting Mao [answer not finished]

A

They could have sent anyone. There were so many other educated ones. There was Samling, Tsögo.

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Q

So did you write the letter?

A

The letter, I said I will sent it myself.

Q

So what did he say? [Did he say] that that was not okay?

A

He said you absolutely must [tib. yin gcig min gcig] send it. Then, the day after the meeting with Mao, it seems that the Dalai Lama was in Gangtok. There was this Chinese interpreter called Li Zhuren [Li Zuomin] who spoke Tibetan. At around 11, he approached Sawangchemo with the newspaper with photographs and said, "Oh look! Lhajam kusho has met Chairman Mao and spoke very well. That everything went so well with Chairman Mao and he was so pleased with Lhajam kusho. That Lhajam kusho was very lucky indeed."

Q

So did you not have to write the letter?

A

Who?

Q

They said that you had to write a letter to Sawangchemo. Did you write the letter?

A

I wrote one asking him to come back soon.

Q

So you sent that?

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A

He did not receive it. I didn't write anything in detail.

Q

So later when Sawangchemo came from Gangtok and [answer not finished]

A

Because the real situation is what the government wants to do and we insignificant women, what we say, does not matter. So I did not say much just that things were fine.

Q

Were they not insisting that you send the letter.

A

No, not that much. They were being appropriate [tib. spam po] and not paying much attention [tib. snang med].

Q

Before that had other women's members met Chairman Mao?

A

Before that I had not been on any tours.

Q

No, I mean other members of the Women's Association.

A

Yes, they went.

Q

And did they meet Mao Zedong?

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A

No, never. This was the first time. That was stated in the paper. So during this time Sawangchemo was in India and it was just to show that Chairman Mao was so happy.

Q

So when Sawangchemo returned later, what did he say? Did he say he saw it?

A

Yes, he said he saw it and I think he showed it to everyone saying that Chairman Mao really liked Lhajam kusho . People thought that I had said all kinds of excessive [tib. thal cha] and reckless [tib. gang byung mang byung] things to Chairman Mao. In Lhasa people were saying such things like "Wow! You must have talked with the Chairman Mao very well." I did not say such things. It's what I have already told you.

Q

Then you came to Lhasa? So from the time that the person asked you to write, then where did you go?

A

Then they asked me what I wanted to do. I said I didn't want to stay very long. Taking everything into consideration, since I went on tour it had already been more than two months, so I said that I heard that there were some important pilgrimage sites around Beijing and I would like to visit these. For example, the stupa where the Lord Buddhas tooth was kept, and the Tsuglagang of 500 arhats [tib. dgra bcom lnga brgya] and Yonghe Monastery. So I went to these and many others and then we returned. Yuthok Lhajam Kusho had fervently requested me to bring Sichöla [tib. sri chod lags] [her son] with me. He was in Beijing at that time. So we were together. Now think about at this, they sent us from Lanzhou by plane. Myself, Sichöla, the Chinese women and my servant-- that's all that there were on the plane.

Q

You mean the whole plane?

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A

Yes, the whole plane.

Q

With just 3 persons.

A

Four of us. So after meeting Mao Zedong, later too they showed how nice they were and they took us all the way to Dam [tib. 'dam] [the site of the airport]. The plane was a military one.

Q

So by then, the airfield had moved from Nagchu to Dam?

A

Yes. There was no airfield at Nagchu.

Q

Wasn't there one at Namru [tib. gnam ru]?

A

It was at Dam. In the plane there was a hostess and they served tea and food.

Q

Did you enjoy the food?

A

Yes, it was delicious. Then when we got to Dam we stayed for quite some time. We got to Dam at around 4 and so we stayed till about 7, resting. The pilots had a hotel to stay in. It was so nice. The food and all must be something special for the pilots. There we had a full course meal. We reached Dam at around 3-4 p.m and we stayed there till 7 p.m. Then we went to Lhasa. It took about 3 hours. Then there was a Trekhang estate, what's it called- there was one at Yamda [tib. yab mda'], called Mami. At about that spot there were people

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sent [from Surkhang] to receive us. One car and Kungö Rimshi came. Then we went up [to Lhasa].

Q

When you went from Dam to Lhasa, then what happened?

A

When I arrived at Lhasa I rested for a few days. Then they asked me to come to the Women's Association office. All the Uyön had gathered. The Standing Committee members were there and so were all the Zhuren and the Uyön. Then they asked to me say what I did when I went to China. So I related all in detail.

Q

The newspaper regarding your visit must have already been seen at Lhasa, right?

A

Yes, they had seen it. They said that it was advertised all over Lhasa. They were astounded, saying you have met Chairman Mao and said a lot of things. I said we didn't talk much. Whatever he asked me, I replied.

Q

So at the meeting you said something.

A

Yes, I gave a report. I had a good time, went on a tour, everyday I was entertained, went boating even though there were only four of us. At Shanghai, Sambo kungö and others were there. I met my sister Tsade [tib. tsha sde]. They had come for a tour.

Q

Did you have any conversation with them.

A

At that time, I had not met Mao. "Oh, it is amazing that you had the courage to come alone" [They] said. They should have sent at least one other.

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Q

So it was 1956, almost 1957, and so at that time compared to what it was before, did things get worse.

A

From around 1957 things got worse. The Chinese must be getting suspicious since they were making preparations for war.

Q

Since the time you went down until when you returned, was it different?

A

No, not that much, but in front of Drip Tsecholing [tib. grib tshe mchog gling] a lot of soldiers were coming and there were arms shipments. This was at night. During this time, it seems that in the Kham area the revolt had started, so the Chinese thought that in the ü area the same thing would happen and made a lot of preparations. Then the Tibetans got suspicious.

Q

In 1954 the Dalai Lama went down and in 1955, the Chinese were saying that in the Kham areas the big lamas went and incited the people.

A

Yes it was said that they said like that. Yes, I have heard it. They said that during a lecture.

Q

Anyway, whatever, if they were saying such things in 1956 then the situation must have been getting worse. Then from the Kham area, a lot of people must be coming up [to Lhasa].

A

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Yes, seems that a lot of them were coming up. The war had started down there and they fled from there and stayed in Lhasa and started the Chushigandru.

Q

That sort of started a little later.

A

Yes, so they became big. They held the whole of the south, in Lhoka.

Q

Just before that, was there any disturbance in Lhasa causing a situation where the Khambas could not stay in Lhasa. Was there talk that they must be sent down [back to Kham]?

A

You mean the Chinese?

Q

Yes.

A

The Chinese were saying this all the time, but that the [Tibetan] government also wouldn't let them.

Q

So in Lhasa some said that around Lhasa the Chinese were making preparations, doing target practice. They fortified their houses with sand bags and were getting ready.

A

This was just before the Dalai Lama returned.

Q

So before the Dalai Lama returned from India they made bunkers.

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A

The bunkers were always there.

Q

From earlier on?

A

Yes, from about a month before he returned.

Q

No. no. What about 1952,53.

A

No, not at that time. When Chushigandru went to the south, that's when a lot of bunkers were set up in Lhasa.

Q

Were the bunkers only around their offices or everywhere.

A

Around their offices, to protect them.

Q

Then there were talks that the Tibetan soldiers had a fight with the Chinese soldiers. Have you heard anything like that?

A

No I haven't.

Q

That there was some shooting and somebody got shot-- that during Mönlom a man with a bomb was arrested.

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A

Did they say that?

Q

Yes there was some talk like that.

A

Must be, I don't know.

Q

After Sawangchemo returned what did he say. For example, what did he say they talked about?

A

If stayed in Tibet then the dangerous time had come. The Chinese were increasing. The Chushigandru had revolted. So, that's what he was thinking. It would not be peaceful in Tibet. There were 70 government officials, the most trusted ones, and they had a meeting .

Q

70 officials were selected?

A

Yes, both lay and monk officials.

Q

When was this?

A

In 1958.

Q

The uprising was in the [question not finished]

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A

It was in 1959.

Q

I see, so now we have come to 1959?

A

I think it was around the 1st month of 1959. The Dalai Lama left in the 3rd month.

Q

So 2 months before?

A

Probably, something like that. So the officials, it is said, made a pledge not to tell anyone. Made a big pledge. At the meeting the main speaker was Sawangchemo. He said that we have reached a very dangerous point. If we just hang around thinking that things will be alright, then if the Dalai Lama comes under the Chinese it would be just terrible. Tibet will later be gone completely [tib. rtsa brlag]. So we must take the Dalai Lama abroad. So if we did that, then what do you all think, give me your opinions because that is what I think. He told me that's what he said. I don't know what the others said. I can't tell you. Most said it was a good idea, that the Dalai Lama should leave. That the Dalai Lama should think about it.

Q

So in the meeting [question not finished]

A

In the meeting Kungö Tsögo one or two others who worked for the Chinese were there. It was said that they reported about the meeting to the Chinese and the impossibility of Tibetan- Chinese friendly relations. Then Tsögo did not come to the meetings anymore saying that he wished to take leave and he and about 3 kudrak took leave. Sawangchemo had to go and the Chinese learned about all the discussions. Sawangchemo was the main person and the Chinese were very angry. So this meeting was going on and then there

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was another large Chinese meeting. At that meeting, there the Dalai Lama's 2 tutors were present. It is said that the Dalai Lama was invited also, but he didn't go. All the kudrak were there, the youth and the women's [association members] and prominent people from the general public. The Chinese gave lectures, the 2 tutors also and when it was Sawangchemo's turn to give a lecture, he didn't stay.

Q

Was this at a Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region meeting?

A

On the one hand, the Dalai Lama should not stay. This is what Sawangchemo was saying. On the other hand when they wanted him to give a lecture, then what was he going to say? It is not possible to say anything. He was in great difficulty, wasn't he? So at the Chinese meeting, when the Chinese tell Surkhang Kalön to give a lecture, what is he going to say?

Q

So when it was his time to speak, he didn't stay?

A

He didn't speak and he came home.

Q

During the meeting? So what did he say?

A

He just got up and left. He didn't say a thing. Without speaking, he came home. He said he didn't stay at the meeting. So the next day and after that they were saying that the Chinese leader Tan Zhuren was furious and at the meeting he banged his fists on the table and said, "That's right, this Surkhang Kalön is like that. This man, up to this day, has not done a single thing to benefit China. Everything, we have noted down, the year, the month, the day and the hour. So today he did like that, didn't give a lecture and left". It is said that he [Tan Zhuren] said a lot. "This person is the kind of person who should be

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punished publicly. We will never just let things be. Today is the first warning. Do it 3 times and we will arrest him". In one way it was good since he found some cleverness.

A lot of kudrak came to the house saying that this is very serious and what are you going to do. You should flee. There were many who told him that. Also they said that if he stayed here they will never let him stay nicely.

Q

Who came to the house to say these things? Was it kudrak and were there any from monasteries, traders?

A

Some of our khamtsen monks came. Then Janglochen Gung [tib. lcang lo can gung], Kungö Sambo, then Kujar and many others. Then the kudrak said that all of us officials are going to have a meeting and we will not hand in Sawangchemo. If something happens to him then we want the same thing to happen to us. We will never give him up. So it is said that they met.

Q

So they had a meeting?

A

Yes, they had one, saying that they will not hand in Sawangchemo. They secretly talked about it and sent the message to the three great monasteries and all.

Q

Did they have a place that they met or how was it?

A

They would go from house to house. Most government officials. Sawangchemo they said is the main person who challenges the Chinese and we will not let him go from our hands.

Q

Was it yesterday or the day before when we spoke about the meeting of the 70 odd officials at Shöl or some place. Then at another meeting, a Chinese meeting,

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Sawangchemo didn't speak and just left. Then after that Tibetans said that they would not hand in Sawangchemo. So we had reached that point. So at that time the Chinese scolded Sawangchemo and said they were going to do something. So at that time did they meet?

A

The Tibetans?

Q

Yes.

A

Yes they met and it is said that they were not going to hand him over to the Chinese. A lot of people also came to see us, kudrak came, saying Sawangchemo be alert since the Chinese are furious. They said that they were going to arrest him.

Q

Then what happened after that. Was there some meeting of the monasteries or not?

A

They spoke among themselves and I think they discussed this a lot. However, there was no starting of a widespread group with meetings. The Chinese also said that their scolding of Sawangchemo had really alarmed the people. A lot of people were feeling unbearable. The monasteries were also sending messages. So it seems that the Chinese heard all this. So they were also suspicious, probably thinking that all of a sudden there may be some unrest. If this happened, all people would rise up and the Chinese had not finished their war preparations so for the time being they may have said that it would be better to cool things down. I think they thought that.

So one day Li Chuzhang [Li Zuomin] came to see Sawangchemo. He was a Chinese who spoke Tibetan, did interpreting and was also a notable cadre. He asked Sawangchemo to come to the Military Headquarters [ch. si ling bu] as Tan [Guansan] Zhuren had requested him to come. Sawangchemo said, "What is it about?". "Nothing, he wants to talk a little with you". Deep inside I think he wondered what it was about --going to the military headquarters. However, he just went kind of without paying attention [tib. snang med].

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Q

He didn't say anything?

A

He took a servant and went.

Q

Who was the servant?

A

It was the drönyer Tsering Pembar [tib. tshe ring dpal 'bar]. The Chinese leader had come near to the door and said, "Oh, Surkhang Kalön has come." and acted so pleased. He told him to come in and shook hands. They sat in the sitting room and tea and snacks were served. Tan Zhuren said, "I had to scold you last time and for that you must have been very angry. So please don't be disappointed with that. If a very close friend is about to fall from the cliff, it is our duty to pull him up. You have made mistakes in your work. You are among the better and more educated Tibetan Government officials, so when you make such mistakes, we feel a great loss. So we have pulled you up as you were about to fall into the abyss. So please don't be angry, [ch. dui bu qi] he said.

Q

[ch. dui bu qi] means?

A

"I'm sorry." So he continued, "At that time, when it was your turn to speak, you didn't stay. It was one of our big meetings, not just a small one. So that was a big mistake. And at that time I was very angry. However, after thinking it over, we have to be mutually friendly. We just said those things, but we won't do anything like that." So Sawangchemo must have said, alright, alright. So he said that that was what was said at the Military Headquarters. We were so afraid, thinking that they will not let him return. They would not take him by force, but just ask him to come matter-of-factly. I thought that they would keep him there and not allow him to come home. We were so afraid. Then he came quite soon. It didn't take very long. He said, "Wow! they were saying like that".

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Q

Last time you were saying that Sichöla was in China. At that at was he not going to school in India?

A

No, he was not. Sichöla, Dündüla [tib. bdud 'dul lags] and about 15 other kudrak children were at the Nationality Institute [tib. mi rigs slob grwa] in Beijing. Sichöla was at the school and Dündüla went as part of the football team to China. He went to play football in China.

Q

Then in 1956-57 were there any going to school in India.

A

No, they were all going down to China then. Most of them would not dare to go.

Q

Last time, when I was talking to my father he said that those who were staying in Darjeeling and Kalimpong were told that it was not good to send children to school in India and that they were trying to have them send them to Tibet. At first they were in school in India and then [question not finished]

A

Yes, the Chinese said not to leave the children in India and that they should be withdraw [from school]. I think that's what they said. They were withdrawn.

Q

So at first they were going to school, right?

A

Yes, there were many. Three from Kapshöba, and then there was Sumdo [tib. gsum mdo], and quite a few?

Q

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From your family?

A

J.T., Yuthok Sichöla, Jigmela, Dündüla, Yabshi Langdün Pemala [tib. glang mdun pad ma lags] and them, Ngabö's three children. There were many.

Q

So the Chinese were saying that they have to go back?

A

They were saying not to sent them there. Schools have been established in Tibet so send them to school in Tibet. There is no need to know the English language, just Tibetan and Chinese is sufficient.

Q

Who was it, J.T. or Chöndenla [tib. chos ldan lags] or who?

A

Chöndenla was there.

Q

Then she came up.

A

Yes.

Q

I recall something about either Yangjenla [tib. dbyangs can lags] or somebody who in 1957 [queation not finished]

A

Then the Tsarong girls were there, Tsering Drölmala [tib. tshe ring sgrol ma lags], Thöndup Drölmala [tib. don grub sgrol ma lags], they were there. Then they went back and Namla and others attended the Society School,[tib. spyi tshogs slob grwa].

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Q

Then a lot of us went to school in India again in 1956, 1957. I went to school in 1957.

A

I see.

Q

Didn't anyone from your family come down?

A

J.T.la and others went in 1957 again.

Q

In 1957. Did they go to study or did they go at the time the Dalai Lama came to India?

A

They went when the Dalai Lama went to India and then did not return. Yangjenla and they went after this.

Q

Yangchen and who?

A

Chöndenla went from India to that side . She went to the Society School for about 3 or 4 years. Then she came to India again.

Q

What year was that?

A

That was in 1957 and Yangjen was also sent you know? When the Queen mother of Sikkim returned they were sent with her.

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Q

So were they sent for the purposes of study or was there a feeling that the situation was not good.

A

The situation was also not so good. The Khamba revolt had begun and they were coming up [to Lhasa]. We thought things wouldn't be good in Lhasa so they were sent. Whatever may be, we thought it was better to send the children to India since it was a free country. Chöndenla went as the companion of Yangjen. Surkhang Khenjung was always in India. In 1957 when the Dalai Lama went for the Buddha Jayanti, since then he [Surkhang Khenjung] stayed in India.

[In a later conversation off tape, Surkhang Lhajam mentioned that goods were also sent to India around 1956 as well as money through the Sikkim Queen Mother. A bank account was opened with the money Surkhang got from selling their house. Tresur [tib. bkras zur] also send their things in Surkhang's truck. Chöndenla, was supposed to get married to the Sumdo family, but she did not want to get married and was send as a companion to Yangjenla. It was all done secretly and Yangjenla was to go as the Sikkim Queen mother's daughter if any questions were asked. The Surkhang family also sent some of their possessions. I mention this since Surkhang Lhajam was living apart from the house and Surkhang Khenjung was to look after their things in India. J.T. was already in India. The Yuthok family also send their things. So did Tsarong. So in 1958 when the Chinese were listing all the misdeeds of Surkhang Wangchen Gelek [tib. dbang chen dge legs], during the mentioned above, the sending of their children to India was also one of his misdeeds which was used to show what kind of a person he was.]